

# The FUTURISTS, LATEST COMERS in the WORLD of ART

By ANDRE TRIDON

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It is not necessary to dispute the judgment passed by a Paris correspondent of THE SUN on the futurist paintings which are on view at the Bernheim Gallery. He judged them by the accepted classical standards. Judged by the accepted classical standards they are crude, primitive, distressing, grotesque, too simple or too complex.

And so were Rodin's statues and Wagner's operas judged by the accepted classical standards of twenty years ago.

Critics are prone to characterize all innovations as art in its infancy or in its decadence, while some of them are really a new form of art suffering from growing pains.

It is idle to deplore a lack of technique



**F.T. MARINETTI.**  
WHO COINED THE WORD  
**FUTURISM.**

in futurist canvases when they are painted according to an absolutely novel technique.

If the Italian poet and novelist Marinetti had not coined the convenient word "futurism" the new artistic tendency which reveals itself in the works of Balla, Boccioni, Carrà, Russolo, Severini and others might have been awkwardly designated as Post-Rodinism or Straussism in painting.

The futurists believe with Rodin and Strauss that there is no limit to artistic progress any more than there is to scientific progress and that progress is achieved only at the cost of numberless experiments with new material.

Such a doctrine should be eminently welcome in this country. Wherever Americans have forged ahead of the Old World they have done so not by imitating the Old World but by introducing innovations unknown to it.

To give only one example: The marvellous skyscrapers erected in recent years, which are at the same time things of beauty, of power and of practical usefulness, and which not only are well adapted architecturally to the needs of giant cities but artistically speaking fit their environment, owe nothing to the Old World. The skyscraper fits the type of beauty dear to futurists, the beauty of feverish activity, of manifold interests, of simultaneous sensations, of healthy power. Contemplation, slothfulness and death no longer interest the modern man. Life in its myriad aspects is the only thing that fascinates us.

Whatever has survived of ancient art, whatever of the paintings and sculptures of the past centuries still has a strong appeal for modern art lovers and modern notes alike is whatever expresses living life.

What makes the "Venus de Milo" and the "Winged Victory" the favorites of visitors to the Louvre? The extraordinary vitality of the one, the irresistible crush of the other toward a certain goal.

The fascination exerted by fast moving trains, automobiles, flying machines, dolls that roll their eyes and speak, histrionism good or bad, moving picture films as against ox carts, pastedboard slides, printed plays and ordinary lantern slides is due to the universal craving of human beings for the sight of life and motion.

A desire to express this yearning through the medium of clay was responsible for the storm of abuse that greeted Rodin when he first emerged, not so long ago, from his comparative obscurity. In his conversations with Geell we find Rodin outlining the very art ideas which are at the basis of the futurist doctrine.

"No part of a motion," Rodin said, "can suggest the rest of the motion"; therefore, in order to suggest motion in one single subject, an artist must attribute to each part of the subject's body one fraction of the motion he wishes to represent. When there are several figures, the process is much easier. After analyzing several composite sculptures or paintings "full of action," Rodin noticed that the impression of life they give comes from the fact that one motion has been decomposed into its various stages, every figure assuming one stage only. In Watteau's "Embarkation for the Isle of Cythera," for instance, some of the figures are near the river, some are coming down the bank, some stand on the hill, some are rising and the last pair are still seated on the ground. The means matter little so long as the illusion of life is created.

So convinced is Rodin that life and motion are the essentials of the work of art that, instead of hiring a model to sit to him and of copying a pose arbitrarily selected, he spends hours observing men and women models who do not pose but move about in one of his studios, assuming perfectly natural poses, which never become congealed from protracted immobility.

Rodin is old, however, and none of the futurists is over thirty-five. They naturally want to start where Rodin left off. For true to the futurist axiom, that yesterday will always be wrong as against tomorrow, they have no her worship in their hearts.

What makes their works so distressing to the layman is that they embody an en-



**REMEMBRANCES OF A NIGHT.**  
BY **LUIGI RUSSOLO.**



**A STREET RIOT.**  
BY **LUIGI RUSSOLO.**  
(IN CONVENTIONAL PERSPECTIVE.)



**LAUGHTER, BY UMBERTO BOCCIONI.**



**A DANCER BY GINO SEVERINI.**

New Conception of Perspective and Dynamism Which Makes Their Paintings Seem Odd When Judged by Ordinary Standards—Aims and Methods of the Futurists and Effects They Seek to Produce.

CARLO CARRÀ

**A STREET RIOT.**  
(IN FUTURIST PERSPECTIVE.)

fits of hilarity that their features, except in the case of a stout and sluggish woman, are no longer distinguishable and their heads, hands, sleeves and coat lapels describe through space the most fantastic maze of lines.

A painter applying the traditional precepts to the treatment of the subject selected by Russolo, "Memories of a Night," would have in all likelihood isolated artificially one of the incidents by which one special night is remembered and would have eliminated entirely all other incidents.

As we remember scraps of life rather than whole periods of life, one feature of a face rather than every detail of the face, one individual in a group rather than the group, the conventional artist would have on one hand added things he didn't remember and on the other subtracted things he did remember.

Endeavoring to visualize the individual mood, the individual atmosphere of one certain night, Russolo evoked all the incidents of that special night as they

the curious outline of a glove (or is it a hand?); a cup of champagne, etc.

Who can deny the power of suggestion which emanates from this jumble of ideas, shapes and colors? And the whole thing is perfectly true to life. The mood of one special night cannot be rendered pictorially by isolating either one of the female figures or one of the night provokers and devoting to it a whole canvas. Only a composite picture attributing different values to the different components of our visual memory of the night will be sincere and realistic.

Or isn't this means of suggestion as legitimate as the convention according to which a blond girl is represented clasping her pillow in her arms while a swarm of little cupids is fluttering about her; the title of this pictorial platitude being "Dreams of Love."

After explaining the futurist theory and offering examples of its application, hesitating as groping as they may be, we must give in its entirety the artists' manifesto which was drawn up two years ago by the futurist painters and which was read to an audience of artists and litterateurs gathered at the Chiarella Theatre in Turin, Italy, on March 8, 1910.

We may mention the fact that the meeting at the Chiarella was enlivened by much the same sort of incidents which made "The Playboys" performances notable. The poet Marinetti only succeeded in silencing the howling mob by an amusing display of coolness. He caught on the fly an orange which was speeding past him and, interrupting his address, peeled it, quartered it and ate it with the greatest unconcern. That saved the day.

Here is the manifesto the reading of which infuriated the audience that night as only Latin and Irish audiences can be infuriated:

MANIFESTO OF THE FUTURIST PAINTERS.

We contend:

1. That every form of imitation must be scorned and that every form of originality must be glorified.

2. That we must break away from the bondage of harmony and "good taste," overelated terms with which one could easily condemn any of Rembrandt's, Goya's or Rodin's work.

3. That art critics are useless if not harmful.

4. That we must make a clean sweep of all hackneyed subjects and express henceforth the whirlwind life of our day, dominated by steel, egotism, feverish activity and speed.

5. That we must prize highly the title of "cranks," that age applied by Philistines to the lips of innovators.

6. That contemporary subjects and colors are as absolutely necessary in painting as blank verse is in poetry and polyphony in music.

7. That the universal dynamism must be rendered through canvases producing a dynamic sensation.

8. That nature must be interpreted with a sincere and virgin mind.

9. That motion must be depicted and destroy the concrete aspect of objects.

We disapprove:

1. Of the bluish tints by which painters try to impart to modern canvases the patina of age.

2. Of the superficial and primitive archaism which uses absolute colors and which, in its imitation of the Egyptians (linear drawing), reduces painting to a childish and ridiculous synthesis.

3. Of the progressive pretence of secessionists and independents who have entrenched themselves behind academic rules as platitude and conservative as those of the old academy.

4. Of the nude in painting, as nauseating and cloying as adulatory fiction.

5. Of the futurist painters who, in their desire to be original, have imitated the futurist painters of the past.

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